

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for creating user groups in a network environment comprising the steps of:

monitoring a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

identifying at least one real-time affinity among a plurality of the user sessions based on session data associated with currently active user sessions, each session being associated with a different user; an affinity being defined as a similarity between two or more user sessions; and

responsive to said affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity; and

prompting a plurality of facilitating the users of the user group user sessions having the identified affinity to engage in communication.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising wherein the facilitating step includes establishing a communication pathway among the user sessions of the user group ~~of monitoring said plurality of user sessions.~~

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said prompting step further comprises the step of providing access to an interaction application for at least two of said plurality of user sessions responsive to said identified affinity.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein said prompting step further comprises the step of establishing a communication pathway to facilitate real time communications between users associated with said at least two user sessions.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said step of establishing a communication pathway further comprises the step of opening at least one of a chat session, an instant messaging session, a newsgroup, and a shared application.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session cookies associated with said user sessions.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session objects associated with said user sessions.
8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said session objects comprise at least one datum selected from the group consisting of a URL which has been accessed, an amount of time on-line, an item in a shopping cart, and a user identifier.
9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein said user identifier comprises at least one of a postal code, an area code, a city, a county, a state, a province, a country and a continent.
10. (Currently Amended) ~~A method for creating user groups in a network environment comprising the steps of:~~ The method of claim 1, wherein the facilitating step includes
~~identifying at least one affinity among a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user; and~~

~~responsive to said affinity identification, presenting a user interface to at least one user in the user sessions of the user group.~~

11. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections, said code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

monitoring a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

identifying at least one real-time affinity among a plurality of the user sessions based on session data associated with currently active user sessions, each session being associated with a different user; an affinity being defined as a similarity between two or more user sessions; and

responsive to said affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity; and

prompting a plurality of facilitating the users of the user group user sessions having the identified affinity to engage in communication.

12. (Currently Amended) The machine-readable storage of claim 11, further comprising wherein the facilitating step includes establishing a communication pathway among the user sessions of the user group of monitoring said plurality of user sessions.

13. (Previously Presented) The machine-readable storage of claim 11, wherein said prompting step further comprises the step of providing access to an interaction application for at least two of said plurality of user sessions responsive to said identified affinity.

14. (Original) The machine-readable storage of claim 13, wherein said prompting step further comprises the step of establishing a communication pathway to facilitate real time communications between users associated with said at least two user sessions.
15. (Original) The machine-readable storage of claim 14, wherein said step of establishing a communication pathway further comprises the step of opening at least one of a chat session, an instant messaging session, a newsgroup, and a shared application.
16. (Original) The machine-readable storage of claim 11, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session cookies associated with said user sessions.
17. (Original) The machine-readable storage of claim 11, wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session objects associated with said user sessions.
18. (Original) The machine-readable storage of claim 17, wherein said session objects comprise at least one datum selected from the group consisting of a URL which has been accessed, an amount of time on-line, an item in a shopping cart, and a user identifier.
19. (Original) The machine-readable storage of claim 18, wherein said user identifier comprises at least one of a postal code, an area code, a city, a county, a state, a province, a country and a continent.
20. (Currently Amended) [[A]] ~~The machine-readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections, said code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:~~ of Claim 11, wherein the facilitating step includes

~~identifying at least one affinity among a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user; and~~

~~responsive to said affinity identification, presenting a user interface to at least one user in the user sessions of the user group.~~

21. (Currently Amended) A computer system for creating user groups in a network environment comprising:

means for monitoring a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

means for identifying at least one real-time affinity among a plurality of the user sessions based on session data associated with currently active user sessions, each session being associated with a different user an affinity being defined as a similarity between two or more user sessions; and

means for, responsive to the affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity; and

means for prompting a plurality of facilitating the users of the user group user sessions having the identified affinity to engage in communication responsive to said affinity identification.

22. (Currently Amended) A system for creating user groups in a network environment comprising: The computer system of Claim 21, wherein the means for facilitating the users of the user group to engage in communication includes

means for identifying at least one affinity among a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user; and

means for presenting a user interface to at least one user in the user sessions of the user group responsive to said affinity identification.